

We claim:

1. A pant-like, refastenable, disposable absorbent article which defines a front waist region, a back waist region, a crotch region which extends between and connects said waist regions, a longitudinal direction and a lateral direction, said absorbent article comprising:

a) an absorbent chassis which defines an exterior surface, an interior surface opposite said exterior surface, a pair of laterally opposed side edges and a pair of longitudinally opposed waist edges;

b) a pair of opposed side panels which extend outward from and between said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said front waist region and said back waist region of said absorbent article to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings in said pant-like disposable absorbent article, wherein each of said opposed side panels defines a first side margin which is permanently attached to said side edge of said absorbent chassis in one of said front waist region and said back waist region of said absorbent article to provide a permanent joint and a second side margin which is releasably attached to said side edge of said absorbent chassis in an opposite waist region of said absorbent article to provide a releasable joint; and

c) a fastener permanently attached to each of said second side margins of said side panels, wherein said fastener defines a fastener edge length in said longitudinal direction and said releasable joint defines a releasable joint length in said longitudinal direction, wherein said releasable joint length is greater than said fastener edge length.

2. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said absorbent chassis comprises:

a) an outer cover;

b) a bodyside liner which is connected to said outer cover in a superposed relation; and

c) an absorbent core disposed between said outer cover and said bodyside liner.

3. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said fasteners are configured to refastenably engage said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis in said opposite waist region to assist in providing said releasable joint.

4. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said fasteners are hook and loop type fasteners.

5. The absorbent article of claim 3 and further comprising at least one attachment panel which is located on said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis wherein said fasteners are refastenably engaged to said attachment panel.

6. The absorbent article of claim 3 wherein said absorbent chassis includes an outer cover which provides said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis and wherein said fasteners are refastenably engaged directly to said outer cover of said absorbent chassis.

7. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said side panels are extensible at least in said lateral direction.

8. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about two times greater than said fastener edge length.

9. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about three times greater than said fastener edge length.

10. The absorbent article of claim 1 and further defining an article centerline in said longitudinal direction wherein each of said fasteners includes a fastener ear that is attached to said second side margin of said side panel and extends inwardly toward said article centerline when in a prefastened configuration.

11. The absorbent article of claim 10 wherein said fastener ears are extensible at least in said lateral direction.

12. The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein each of said releasable joints includes a releasable bond located on said second side margin which releasably bonds said second side margin of said side panels to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said opposite waist region to assist in maintaining said pant-like, disposable absorbent article in a prefastened condition.

13. The absorbent article of claim 12 wherein said releasable bonds are ultrasonic bonds.

14. A pant-like, refastenable, disposable absorbent article which defines a front waist region, a back waist region, a crotch region which extends between and connects said waist regions, a longitudinal direction and a lateral direction, said absorbent article comprising:

a) an absorbent chassis which defines an exterior surface, an interior surface opposite said exterior surface, a pair of laterally opposed side edges and a pair of longitudinally opposed waist edges;

b) a pair of opposed back panels which are permanently attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said back waist region of said absorbent article;

c) a pair of opposed front panels which are releasably attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said front waist region of said absorbent article to provide a pair of releasable joints wherein said front panel and said back panel on each side edge of said absorbent chassis are connected together along a side seam to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings and provide said pant-like, releasable, disposable absorbent article; and

d) a fastener permanently attached to each of said front panels adjacent said releasable joint and configured to refastenably engage said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis in said front waist region, wherein said fastener defines a fastener edge length in said longitudinal direction and said releasable joint defines a releasable joint length in said longitudinal direction, wherein said releasable joint length is greater than said fastener edge length.

15. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein said absorbent chassis includes an outer cover which provides said exterior surface of said absorbent chassis and wherein said fasteners are configured to refastenably engage directly with said outer cover of said absorbent chassis.

16. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein said side panels are extensible in at least said lateral direction.

17. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about two times greater than said fastener edge length.

18. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein said releasable joint length is at least about three times greater than said fastener edge length.

19. The absorbent article of claim 14 and further defining an article centerline in said longitudinal direction wherein each of said fasteners includes a fastener ear that is attached to said second side margin of said side panel and extends inwardly toward said article centerline when in a prefastened configuration.

20. The absorbent article of claim 19 wherein each of said fastener ears are extensible in at least said lateral direction.

21. The absorbent article of claim 14 wherein each of said releasable joints includes a releasable bond located on said second side margin which releasably bonds said second side margin of said side panels to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said opposite waist region to assist in maintaining said pant-like, disposable absorbent article in a prefastened condition.

22. The absorbent article of claim 21 wherein said releasable bonds are ultrasonic bonds.

23. A pant-like, refastenable, disposable absorbent article which defines a front waist region, a back waist region, a crotch region which extends between and connects said waist regions, a longitudinal direction and a lateral direction, said absorbent article comprising:

a) an absorbent chassis which defines an exterior surface, an interior surface opposite said exterior surface, a pair of laterally opposed side edges and a pair of longitudinally opposed waist edges; and

b) a pair of opposed back panels which are permanently attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said back waist region of said absorbent article;

c) a pair of opposed front panels which are permanently attached to said side edges of said absorbent chassis in said front waist region of said absorbent article wherein said front panel and said back panel are releasably connected together along a side seam to provide a releasable joint and to define a waist opening and a pair of leg openings and provide said absorbent article; and

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31. The absorbent article of claim 30 wherein said releasable bonds are ultrasonic bonds.

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